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**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

August 1986

Prepared by the Federal Research Division of  
the Library of Congress under an interagency agreement

Analysts: LaVerle Berry  
Robert Handloff  
T. Robert Lenaghan  
Moses Pinkston  
Rachel Warner

## PREFACE

This chronology is organized by region, country, and date of event. The date of event is sometimes difficult to determine because it varies from source to source. Some sources cite the actual date of the incident whereas others appear to use the official news release dateline. When possible, the actual date of the occurrence is listed.

Analysts contributing to this chronology are LaVerle Berry, Robert Handloff, T. Robert Lenaghan, Moses Pinkston, and Rachel Warner.

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East/Central Africa

Equatorial Guinea

20/08/86 Eugenio Abeso Mondu, a former member of Parliament, is sentenced to death for plotting against state security and is promptly executed. Another unspecified number of political figures, including President Obiang's uncle, Deputy Prime Minister Fructuoso Mba Onana, and the Malabo Chief of Police are sentenced to prison terms ranging from 4 months to 20 years for allegedly plotting a coup. The coup was to have taken place on 20 July 1986, shortly after Obiang returned from a state visit to France. The president also accused many members of his own clan of joining the plotters, thus allowing him a pretext for imprisoning some close relatives who are believed to harbor political ambitions.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia

14/08/86 Foreign Minister Goshu Wolde returns from a trip to Bulgaria, where he met with President Todor Zhivkov, Premier Georgi Filipov, and Foreign Minister Mladenov to discuss ways of further strengthening bilateral relations. Among topics discussed were international issues, the foreign politics of the two nations, and the arms race. The Ethiopian delegation also presented briefings on the state of the Ethiopian revolution, current events in Ethiopia, and the proposed draft Constitution that will create the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. These topics are of great interest to both parties since the Ethiopian Government regards Bulgaria as the model of a Socialist state.

Ethiopia/Somalia

26/08/86 The second meeting of the Ethiopia-Somalia ad hoc joint ministerial committee adjourns with agreement to hold the next meeting in Addis Ababa at a mutually convenient date. Somali Foreign Minister Abdurahman Jama Barre and Ethiopian Foreign Minister Goshu Wolde held 4 days of talks in a further attempt to find a peaceful solution to the problem of the Ogaden and its Somali inhabitants. Both men view the meeting as a step forward in their evolving relationship. The joint ministerial committee is the result of proposals agreed upon by Ethiopian Head of State Mengistu and Somali President Barre during their meeting last January in Djibouti.

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Horn of Africa

Sudan

- 10/08/86 Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi returns from a 2-day visit to Libya, where he met with Libyan leader Qadhafi and other Libyan officials for discussions on bilateral cooperation and Sudanese efforts to find a solution to the problems in Chad. He says that Libyan forces that have been present in Dafur Province in western Sudan have returned to Libya. These troops, numbering about 1,000, were reportedly encamped near Fashir and linked with military developments in Chad.
- 15/08/86 Prime Minister al-Mahdi returns from a 5-day trip to the Soviet Union which he says "has opened a new page in Sudanese-Soviet relations." Characterizing the trip as "a corrective step to achieve nonalignment," al-Mahdi says that Sudan must have normal relations with the Soviet Union since it is a superpower. The talks centered on plans for future meetings for a ministerial committee, protocols regulating bilateral work and cooperation, Soviet technical aid to complete or revitalize Soviet-sponsored hospitals and factories, diversification of technology sources, and promotion of trade between the two countries.
- 16/08/86 Rebel forces of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) shoot down a Sudanese airliner on a domestic flight shortly after takeoff from Malakal, about 420 miles south of Khartoum, killing all 60 people aboard. The incident follows by a day an SPLA warning that any plane, military or civilian, flying to Juba, Wau, Malakal, or any other town in government hands in the south, would do so at its own risk. The SPLA warning applies both to government flights and those of international relief agencies ferrying food to besieged populations in government-held areas. The SPLA alleges that food relief flights provide a cover for reinforcement of government garrisons.
- 17/08/86 In response to the shooting down of the Sudan Airways domestic airliner on 16 August by the SPLA, Prime Minister

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al-Mahdi orders the suspension of all air traffic to and from southern Sudan. This action effectively isolates the populations and garrisons in government-held southern towns from Khartoum, since land links have also been severed. The ban on flights also affects international relief efforts, raising the spectre of mass starvation in several towns. Since the beginning of the year, tens of thousands of civilians, seeking food and protection from the SPLA rebels, have fled into southern towns. Although the towns are still controlled by government garrisons, several major ones are besieged by SPLA forces.

19/08/86 In the aftermath of the downing of the Sudan Airways plane, the government says that it will no longer negotiate with the SPLA about the future of the country and ending the SPLA insurgency. Meetings between the SPLA officials and the National Salvation Alliance, a coalition of government parties, have been going on since early August as a result of an agreement reached at talks in Ethiopia in late July between Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi and SPLA leader John Garang.

25/08/86 Prime Minister al-Mahdi announces that conscription will be introduced to deal with the insurgency in the south and to meet defense requirements, and that the National Defense Council is assessing the needs of the armed forces for equipment, vehicles, and other resources. He also labels the SPLA a hostile and illegal movement, in keeping with his declaration a few days earlier that it is a "terrorist rebel movement and that dealings with it will be based on this principle." At that time he predicted that a military confrontation with the rebels was "inevitable." Al-Mahdi warns that "Sudan will define its relations with its neighbors in light of their attitude toward the outlaws," an obvious reference to the aid and protection that Ethiopia accords the SPLA.

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26/08/86 The Ugandan Government decides to close its border with Sudan in an effort to cut off supplies from its opponents in southern Sudan. These opponents, remnants of the armed opposition whom the National Resistance Army (NRA) chased from Uganda earlier this year, allegedly intercepted relief supplies bound for cities and towns in southern Sudan and used them to help support raids in northern Uganda. The border will reopen, Ugandan sources say, when Uganda is assured that relief materials will not fall into the hands of forces loyal to deposed General Tito Okello, former commander of the Ugandan Army.

Sahel

Burkina  
29/08/86 Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega concludes a 2-day visit to Burkina by issuing a joint communique with Burkinabe President Sankara that, among other things, condemns US "interference" in Nicaragua. Nothing of substance results from the visit, of which the main purpose seems to have been to get the Third World's two most photogenic radical leaders together for the benefit of the media. The inclusion of the anti-US reference in the final communique was an unavoidable result of the rhetorical and ideological intoxication to which both Ortega and Sankara are prone. Ortega's visit shows that even though Sankara is undeniably putting his government on a more pragmatic and less ideological course, he still has a showman's love of the radical spotlight.

Burkina/Mali

01/08/86 Malian President Traore admits during a press conference that relations with Burkina have deteriorated considerably over the past month. Traore attributed the mounting tension to Burkina's failure to live up to the January 1986 accord between the two countries which ended the Christmas 1985 border war. The situation is once again becoming ominous as both countries concentrate on improving their military capabilities in the disputed Agacher strip region. Burkina has recently acquired ground-to-air missiles, while Mali has held large-scale exercises in the border region and has improved the strategically located Sikasso airfield to allow its use by combat aircraft. These actions, together with the verbal recognition that relations have deteriorated since January, indicate that the Burkina/Mali dispute is a long way from being settled, and may again flare up into open conflict.

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Chad  
15/08/86 Acheikh ibn Oumar, secretary general of the Revolutionary Democratic Council (CDR), one of the major components of the Chadian Transitional National Union Government (GUNT), accuses GUNT leader Goukouni Oueddei of indulging in "extortion, torture, and physical liquidation." These accusations come a day after Acheikh ibn Oumar announces that the CDR will "suspend its activities" in GUNT because of differences with Goukouni Oueddei and some of his aides. Acheikh ibn Oumar is the second Chadian opposition figure, after GUNT Vice President Colonel Wadal Abdelkadir Kamougue, to leave the Libyan-backed antigovernment coalition in 2 months.

22/08/86 In heavy fighting between GUNT and CDR forces, CDR forces seize control of the strategic northeastern oasis of Fada, 550 miles northeast of the capital, N'Djamena, depriving Libyan forces in northern Chad of one of their most important outposts. According to Chadian sources, Libyan troops refrained from involvement in the fighting, but Libyan authorities attempted to negotiate between CDR Secretary General Acheikh ibn Oumar and GUNT leader Goukouni Oueddei.

Southern Africa

Angola  
11/08/86 According to a communique issued by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), UNITA forces launched a massive attack against Cuito Cuanavale 2 days before as Cuban forces were about to attack Mavinga with the aim of capturing UNITA's provincial capital, Jamba.

Angola/Zambia  
25/08/86 The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) claims to have inflicted heavy casualties in new attacks on government forces in the southeastern province of Cuando Cubango. In recent weeks, UNITA has announced

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repeated attacks on Cuito Cuanavale; while one of the attacks was officially acknowledged by the government, it was blamed on South African forces. UNITA guerrillas also apparently raided a village in Zambia, marching off four civilians at gunpoint. Zambian police claim that UNITA has abducted a total of 15 civilians in similar raids in the last 3 months.

Mozambique  
06/08/86

A Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) spokesman in Lisbon announces that three Roman Catholic nuns, held in captivity for about a year, were released. According to the spokesman, the three nuns, one Portuguese and two Italians, were released unconditionally to show that RENAMO has nothing against churches working in Mozambique. RENAMO is still holding at least 12 foreign hostages, mostly Portuguese citizens.

15/08/86

The Mozambican People's National Security Service (SNASP) claims that Mozambican airspace in Manica Province has been violated by aircraft which have been landing men and unloading war materiel in recent days. SNASP indicates that the aircraft are identical to South African planes which provided regular supplies of weapons to RENAMO in Gorongosa district before the capture of RENAMO headquarters, Casa Banana, in August 1985. This resupply of RENAMO is occurring during a period of continued violations of the Nkomati Accord by South Africa and is thought to be in preparation for military actions against the Beira corridor.

South Africa

05/08/86

Government officials announce that they will impose economic countermeasures against black-ruled neighboring countries after the announcement of new economic sanctions against Pretoria by the Commonwealth countries. Foreign Minister Botha says at a news conference in Pretoria that these measures will include the imposition of import licences, a levy on goods traveling across the country, and stricter border controls. More than half of southern Africa's trade passes through South African ports under what has been

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nearly a free-trade system. The levy will oblige South Africa's northern neighbors, particularly Zambia and Zimbabwe, to pay for this service.

11/08/86 A supreme court in Natal Province rules that the parts of South Africa's emergency decree permitting detention without trial and for indefinite periods are invalid. Lawyers say that if the ruling survives a government appeal and is upheld in other provinces, it could force the authorities to release the thousands of people detained since the state of emergency was proclaimed on 12 June. The ruling is the latest and most far-reaching judicial challenge to the state of emergency.

13/08/86 The government offers the country's black majority its first nationwide elections in 300 years, but makes it clear that the vote would be to choose those black leaders prepared to negotiate with the white minority. At the same time, Defense Minister Magnus Malan warns black-governed African nations that South Africa had "not even started to use our muscle and capabilities" against those of its neighbors, notably Zimbabwe, seeking economic sanctions. The offer of elections and the threat of reprisals are made at a congress in Durban of the ruling National Party, and seem to reflect the government's insistence that if it is to negotiate a solution to the country's racial crisis, it plans to do so from a position of military and political strength.

14/08/86 Thousands of students stay away from several Soweto secondary schools as a protest against the presence of security forces. The boycott started the day before with pupils leaving their classes in the morning. This is the second time in 2 weeks that pupils have boycotted classes.

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South Africa

- 18/08/86 The government announces that a new segregated township will arise north of Johannesburg's wealthy suburb of Sandton which will accommodate 250,000 blacks. Many observers interpret the announcement to mean that racial separation in housing, a pillar of apartheid, will continue despite government assertions that the ideology of racial and ethnic separation is, if not dead, then a relic. But in another development, the government promises a further weakening of the laws that require racial segregation in such places as movie houses, hotels, and restaurants, although with the proviso that individual proprietors have the final say on whom they serve.
- 18/08/86 The government gives Parliament a list of those it says have been held in detention, acknowledging for the first time that the ranks of people held without charges under the emergency decree number in the thousands. The list, presented by Minister of Law and Order Louis LeGrange, includes the names of 8,501 detainees held since the 12 June emergency decree. The list is apparently disclosed in response to legal requirements that the authorities report to Parliament on some aspects of their conduct under emergency rule.
- 22/08/86 The wife of KwaZulu legislative assembly and Inkatha member Wimmington Sabelo is killed and her three children seriously injured when a hand grenade is thrown into their home in Umlazi near Durban. The attack is probably one in a series of violent acts committed by young radical blacks who are vehemently opposed to the role of black politicians in homeland legislative organs.
- 23/08/86 According to the independent Community Research Group at Witswatersrand University in Johannesburg, both partial and nearly total rent boycotts are underway in 42 of the nation's townships. The Community Research Group estimates that the authorities are losing the equivalent of \$500,000

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per day in rent because of the boycott in which as many as 300,000 black households are participating, making the boycott one of the widest forms of sustained protest ever to emerge in South Africa. The authorities have responded to the boycott by evicting participants from their homes.

26/08/86 Security forces open fire on crowds in Soweto Township, injuring at least 80 people in the most serious outbreak of violence in the township since the 12 June imposition of the state of emergency. According to residents, police were breaking up a meeting of residents involved in a rent boycott. The day before, a clash between security forces and striking students resulted in the death of one protester.

28/08/86 During a protest at Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg over the violence in Soweto 2 days before, about 50 policemen and 400 students confront each other. A statement issued by the Black Students Society explains that the protest is a reflection of the growing impatience of blacks with the determination of the government to crush all forms of opposition, including peaceful methods like rent boycotts, consumer boycotts, and stayaways.

28/08/86 Education officials confirm that thousands of black pupils are boycotting classes at schools in four Durban townships. It is the biggest stayaway at schools in the Durban area since the 12 June declaration of a state of emergency. The boycott, which began on 25 August, is apparently in protest against the shooting of youths in Chesterville the week before. Student leaders have also demanded the release of pupils detained under the emergency regulations.

South Africa/Mozambique

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01/08/86 A spokesman for the eastern Transvaal command confirms that an electrified fence was erected between South Africa and Mozambique. The fence, which stretches from Komatipoort to the start of the border between KaNgwane and Mozambique and runs for about 25 kilometers, is designed to prevent Mozambican refugees fleeing Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) attacks from entering South African territory.

Zimbabwe/Mozambique

15/08/86 Zimbabwean Prime Minister Mugabe announces that Zimbabwe will deploy more troops to defend the railway line to Maputo as well as the Beira corridor in Mozambique. Mugabe says he expects increased attacks by the South African-supported Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) because of the mounting pressure for sanctions against apartheid.

West Africa

11/08/86 The Gabonese, Togolese, and Zairean Heads of State and Defense Ministers from Senegal and Cameroon meet with Ivorian President Houphouet in Ivory Coast to discuss regional and internal security concerns. The last minute meeting follows the announcement by Togolese authorities of a terrorist plot to destroy the American Embassy in Lome. The Togolese authorities say that additional attacks, linked to the Libyan Embassy in Benin, are planned against Ivory Coast and Zaire.

Cameroon

21/08/86 A cloud of poisonous gas erupts from the depths of Lake Nios in southwestern Cameroon and envelops four villages in the valley below, killing over 1,500 people and affecting the lives of more than 20,000 other Cameroonians.

26/08/86 Israel and Cameroon restore diplomatic relations after a 13-year interruption. Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Cameroonian President Paul Biya announce the agreement.

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following 2 days of talks in the Cameroonian capital, Yaounde. Cameroon, like many black African countries, broke relations with Israel after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. In reestablishing formal links, Cameroon joins Ivory Coast and Zaire to become the third sub-Saharan country to do so since 1982. The move was part of Israel's effort to expand ties with black Africa.

Liberia

06/08/86

Three leading figures of the Liberian opposition are jailed for refusing to pay \$1,000 each in fines for forming the illegal "Grand Coalition." The leaders, Edward Kesseley of the Unity Party (UP), Jackson Doe of the Liberia Action Party (LAP) and Gabriel Kpoleh of the Liberian Unification Party (LUP), are being held at the remote Belle Yella Prison, which is commonly used for political prisoners. This latest move by President Doe proves once again that recent talk of reconciliation is only a smoke screen and that Doe will not hesitate to use the repressive power of the state to back up his rule.

31/08/86

Liberian security forces are placed on full alert in response to reports from the Justice Ministry that social unrest is expected in the capital. In a related development, the three political opposition leaders, Edward Kessely, Gabriel Kpoleh and Jackson Doe, are released from prison after agreeing to pay their fines, which were assessed when the three formed an illegal political coalition. The timing of these two events is meant to convey the message to the freed opposition leaders that their release should not be interpreted as a license to return to their strategy of forming a united opposition.

Sierra Leone

23/07/86

Automatic gunfire breaks out at the home of newly appointed Junior Minister Daramy Rogers near the main army post in the Freetown suburb of Wilberforce. Rogers is seriously injured when he jumps from a second floor window in an apparent attempt to escape from the shooting. Unconfirmed reports attribute the incident to Lebanese businessman Jamil Sayid

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Mohamed's private security force, composed mainly of Palestinians. However, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) ambassador in Freetown denies that there are any armed Palestinians in Sierra Leone. A likely explanation for the shootout is that newly appointed Minister Rogers mistakenly felt that his cabinet status should exempt him from making loan payments to Jamil, who was then forced to disabuse the minister of this notion. It is a common practice in Sierra Leone for members of the Lebanese business community to loan funds both to state-owned enterprises and key government officials.

Sierra Leone/Liberia

01/08/86 Approximately 600 troops are deployed to the Guinean and Liberian border areas in an effort to stop the rampant smuggling of scarce goods out of the country. The smuggling problem has recently become more serious following the Liberian Government's decision to reopen its border with Sierra Leone. The deployment of 600 troops represents a significant portion of Sierra Leone's armed forces and will enhance the government's control of the border region around Kono, where there has been some fighting between rival political factions.

Togo

23/07/86 Authorities thwart a plot by Libyan-backed Togolese and Beninois extremists to blow up the American Embassy and Lome's open air market. The plotters had explosives supplied by the Libyan Embassy in neighboring Benin, a self-proclaimed radical state with close ties to Libya. Togo's interior minister says that the nine suspects were found in possession of two briefcases containing plastic explosives, a grenade, and a pistol.